R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 019 561 AC 001 876

JOB TRAINING THROUGH ADULT EDUCATION, A SECOND CHANCE FOR THE NEGRO AND THE COMMUNITY.

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PUB DATE 67

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.92 21P.

DESCRIPTORS- *POVERTY PROGRAMS, *JOB TRAINING, *NEGROES, *UNEMPLOYMENT, *ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS, COMMUNITY ACTION, FAMILY ROLE, VOLUNTEERS, LABOR UNIONS, BUSINESS, HUMAN RELATIONS ORGANIZATIONS, PUBLIC SCHOOL ADULT EDUCATION, FEDERAL PROGRAMS, NEGRO LEADERSHIP, DETROIT, PHILADELPHIA, MANPOWER DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING ACT, TOTAL ACTION AGAINST POVERTY,

TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF INFERIOR EDUCATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT WHICH MAKES MANY NEGROES MEMBERS OF A DISADVANTAGED CLASS, GOOD EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY EDUCATION AND JOB TRAINING FOR ADULTS. HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSIONS, SCHOOL SYSTEMS, NEGRO LEADERS, AND COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAMS HAVE USUALLY FAILED TO PROVIDE PROGRAMS TO UPGRADE THE NEGRO LABOR FORCE. YET JOB TRAINING HAS BEEN SUCCESSFUL UNDER CERTAIN CONDITIONS--WHEN BASED IN THE COMMUNITY AND RESULTING FROM NEGRO PRESSURE AND ASPIRATIONS, WHEN RELATED TO THE NEEDS FELT BY THE NEGRO POOR THEMSELVES, AND WHEN TRAINEES BECOME EMPLOYED. A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM HAS BEEN THE TRADE UNION LEADERSHIP COUNCIL IN DETROIT WHICH HAS WITHIN TWO YEARS TRAINED AND PLACED ABOUT 600 PERSONS. IT HAS BEEN SPONSORED AND STAFFED BY VOLUNTEERS, FINANCED BY LOCAL CONTRIBUTORS, AND USED THE NEGRO COMMUNITY BOTH AS SOURCE OF STUDENTS AND OF FUNDS, IDEAS, STAFF, AND LEADERS. A SIMILAR PROGRAM IN PHILADELPHIA IS THE OPPORTUNITIES INDUSTRIALIZATION CENTER. A PROMISING PROGRAM BEING DEVELOPED IN DETROIT IS THE TOTAL ACTION AGAINST POVERTY, A NEIGHBORHOOD-ORIENTED, COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY ACTION PROGRAM PLACING HIGH PRIORITY ON JOB TRAINING FOR ADULTS. THIS DOCUMENT IS CHAPTER 17 IN EMPLOYMENT, RACE, AND POVERTY, EDITED BY ARTHUR M. ROSS AND HERBERT HILL, PUBLISHED BY HARCOURT, BRACE AND WORLD, NEW YORK. (AJ)

ED019561

Employment, Race, and Poverty

Edited by Arthur M. Ross and Herbert Hill

AC 001 876

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First edition

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 65–23537

Printed in the United States of America

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17 / Job Training Through Adult Education: A Second Chance for the Negro and the Community

Albert A. Blum and

Charles T. Schmidt, Jr.[1]

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A truly circular process helps to make many Negroes members of a disadvantaged class. The Supreme Court's 1954 school-segregation decision, if it did nothing else, pointed up the inferiority of the education available to the Negro, an education that left him less qualified for employment than the average white.

Now the sons of these disadvantaged Negroes are taking their seats in school. Educators are concerned with giving them a chance in life by providing a good primary and secondary education. But this first chance for the children may only raise false hopes if their parents are not given a second chance to gain the skills they need to secure worthwhile jobs in our society. Otherwise the adults may stay in the lost generation of the disadvantaged, thus making it more likely that their children will be unable to break free of the old pattern.

This chapter deals with the role of adult education in giving the Negro his second chance. We will examine the role of

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human relations commissions, school systems, Negro leaders, and community action programs in providing job training for the Negro. We will focus on Detroit, but will also look at what is going on elsewhere.

None of these groups, except in isolated cases, has provided the programs necessary to achieve an upgrading of the adult Negro labor force. Yet job training has been successful under certain conditions. It has to be based in the community and result from the pressure and aspirations of the Negro and his protest movements. The training must also be related to the needs felt by the Negro poor, and not be based on the opinions of well-to-do whites and Negroes on the problems of the hard-core unemployed. Moreover, it is necessary that trainees reap recognizable benefits in the form of jobs.

□ Human Relations Commissions

The need for job training is generally recognized in many cities throughout this country. To see what community-wide organizations concerned with the problems of minority groups were doing to satisfy this need, we surveyed human relations commissions.

One of the consistent demands in local civil rights disputes is that the city government set up a human relations commission, and more than five hundred localities have done so, with varied results. Some criticize these commissions as fostering talk or research instead of action. This charge is surely true regarding job-training programs, for little indeed is done. It is true that many of these local organizations gather statistics about Negro unemployment—mainly gross totals of the number of Negroes in the local work force and the numbers employed and unemployed. But rarely do they find out the number of jobs presently and potentially available, the kinds of skills they require, and the skills the local unemployed or underemployed Negroes possess. Consequently, they are unable to formulate realistic training requirements, particularly

since they even more rarely relate local labor market conditions to the needs of the national labor market.

Why is it that these commissions are so inactive in the field of adult education? For one thing, many of them interpret their authority too narrowly. Detroit's commission, for example, has the authority to develop programs to increase understanding, to promote good will, and to cultivate responsibility for the common welfare. It is supposed to try to "correct situations which it finds to be endangering the peace and welfare of the community, or to be unjust and discriminatory, through negotiation and education." With such a vague mandate, any type of program could be initiated. If job-training courses are not initiated, it is because a commission has failed to assess the Negro's major needs in terms of the actual situation. Inactivity also often results from a commission's interpretation of its proper role as only an advisory one. Moreover, because such commissions are political bodies, their members frequently do not wish to antagonize anyone; therefore, they are willing to preach the need for action but not to go further. As a result, commissions are too often places where problems are discussed but never resolved.

Another important reason for the failure of human rights commissions to engage in job-training programs is that a majority of these organizations feel their main purpose is to ease group tensions. To many, tension appears to be synonymous with explosion. Since the dramatically explosive issues have been overt discrimination in housing, in public accommodations, in public school education, and in employment, these issues have attracted the most attention, often in response to individual complaints. When commissions do present any adult education programs, these tend to deal with means of achieving better human relations in the community.

□ Educational Institutions

For about ninety years, Detroit's Board of Education has provided adult education courses. During the 1963–1964

school year, it offered 325 courses in academic subjects, arts and crafts, avocations, business and commerce, Americanization, home and family, and trades and vocational subjects. At a time when the Federal Government was making financial assistance available to programs designed to train adults (and a fair share of this assistance went to the Detroit school system, as we shall see), the Detroit Board of Education nevertheless felt forced to raise the tuition fees for the 1963–1964 school year because of a shortage of funds. This move reduced the number of students taking such courses from 23,000 to 9000 in one year. Consequently, the Board decided to lower tuition for the 1964–1965 academic year, and to do away with it altogether for those working toward an eighth-grade certificate or a high school diploma.

While teachers and administrators in the elementary and secondary school systems are concerned about the failure of Negro children to work up to their potentials and are consequently developing a host of enrichment programs to attempt to involve parents in their children's education and to prevent dropouts, the adult education program in Detroit remains basically a one-man operation with insufficient research, evaluation, experimentation, or consultation with interested groups. Little that is new in the way of motivating adults and strengthening the courses seems to be forthcoming. The job market is supposedly taken into account, and special classes can be organized in any approved subject upon request from a sufficiently large group. But courses are normally developed on "the basis of ninety years of experience," or after discussion with the administrators of the schools in which they are offered. There is rarely any consultation with the Negro block clubs, fraternal organizations, or community leaders. The programs are announced almost exclusively through the distribution of printed brochures, although some television and radio spot announcements have been used.

Of the approximately 325 subjects offered during the 1963–1964 academic year, about 150, or approximately 46 percent, have job training or skill improvement as their purpose. There

is a serious question as to whether many of the unemployed or unskilled Negroes attend these courses. A 1956 study concluded that "definitely, the low income group in the City was not reached" by the city's adult education program. It listed those whom Detroit adult education failed to serve: older adults; young adults; those unable to afford class fees and accompanying costs; those handicapped physically, emotionally, or mentally; the illiterate; those not able to participate in programs in the evening; the unemployed; those in need of training and retraining opportunities; those new in the community; and those whom the community had failed to motivate. Therefore, the programs obviously attracted and served middle-class or upper-class whites who were long-term residents of Detroit.[2]

Less isolated from the Negro community is the work being done by the Detroit Board of Education in youth and adult education job-training programs Federally sponsored under the Manpower Development and Training Act (MDTA). To house this extensive and expanding program, the Board of Education in 1964 purchased a large surplus U.S. Government building to serve as a Youth and Adult Skill Training Center, with a capacity of approximately 3000 students per year. Programs may also be held at other localities as demand requires.

As of June 30, 1964, there were 46 MDTA programs within the city of Detroit proper, with 86 classes, enrolling a total of 1765 trainees. Of these, 265 had dropped out before the training was completed, 644 completed the training and 956 were still enrolled in training. Of the 644 who completed training, 503 obtained employment in jobs related to their training, 67 obtained unrelated jobs, 42 were unemployed, and 32 were unavailable for work. None were considered unqualified for work.

The school administrators of the MDTA programs are troubled because they do not know enough about the people who need training, nor how they should be attracted into the programs. The Michigan Employment Security Commission (MESC) is responsible for choosing the trainees and eventu-

ally placing them in jobs, but its selection techniques have been criticized. Although the MESC has conducted a young-worker registration drive, it usually has been able to secure enough students for the programs from existing lists of job applicants or from among those who possess the motivation to come into the MESC office of their own accord. It is doubtful that these are the people who need training most desperately. The MESC, or any other agency or organization trying to attract prospective trainees, must somehow use its resources to improve its image, at least among the poor and Negroes, so that it can appeal to the thousands who through ignorance, fear, lack of motivation, difficulty with application forms and bureaucracy, or dissatisfaction with past contacts will not apply to the agency.

The school system has a graver responsibility than most other groups to provide sound job training for the adult Negro. One reason for this major responsibility is that it was the school system (and the society of which it is a part) that failed to provide the Negroes who are now adults with the skills needed in our industrial society when they were young. But more important, the school system must be concerned with job-training programs because these adult, untrained, undereducated Negroes have children now in school.

Educators have been groping and searching for methods by which to motivate the Negro child toward higher achievement. They argue that he must gain a better image of himself and that his parents can help him toward this desired end. Recent educational research has emphasized the value of "significant others," particularly parents, in raising achievement levels. Schools have been attempting to involve the Negro parents in their work, for example, through soliciting their help in reading programs. But what better way is there of involving the parents and showing that education is of value than through an adult education program that can train the adult Negro to hold the job he so desperately needs? The Negro child soon learns from his culture that it does not pay to set his sights too high, and that he cannot improve his

situation by working hard in school: the proof is that his parents lack skill and work. To break this cycle, training is necessary not only for the child but also for the adult Negro—and the training must result in jobs. The "significant other" with whom the child identifies must be a working father, male relative, or friend whose education, even if delayed, has resulted in employment, and who is, therefore, more willing to believe that education will pay off for the child as well.

□ Programs Organized by Negroes

The branches of national civil rights organizations in Detroit seem to be relatively uninterested in job training, the "dull part of desegregation." That this is a tragic omission can be seen when one examines what a Negro protest organization can do in this field. An example, in Detroit, is the Trade Union Leadership Council (TULC), which has the best and most active training program sponsored by a volunteer organization in all of Detroit. It is a program that, without Federal assistance and mainly through local contributions and energy, has within two years trained approximately 600 individuals, over 90 percent of whom were Negroes.

The TULC, founded in 1957 by union members and officials to combat discrimination within labor and elsewhere, eventually broadened its horizons. It recognized that the "problem of job discrimination and discrimination within the unions were problems that should be dealt with within the community as well as within labor." As a result, it expanded its membership to include nonunion people and its program to include the establishment of the TULC Educational Center in 1962–1963.

The school is in an old hardware store. "We started out with four blank walls . . . and all the work has been done by the members. The architect was a member, the plumber was a member, the carpenter was a member—everything was volunteer work. We came around every night, shooting the breeze, grabbing a mouthful of nails and a hammer, and

wham, wham, back and forth," and the school was built. Now another building has been added. Other contributions of money and energy have come from individuals in the community, labor organizations, community services, schools, and churches.[3]

The TULC's students have learned a variety of skills. At first, the training emphasized secretarial and clerical skills (the number of students was often limited by the number of typewriters available), but more recently it has been expanded to include business English, remedial reading, speed reading, business math, power sewing, leadership training, and preapprenticeship electrical training. Students can also take "cosmetic" courses on proper appearance, as well as cultural ones in piano, modern dance, and art. The teachers are unpaid volunteers, some of whom are secretaries at union offices in the city. Classes are usually held in the evening, and there are no registration fees. No applicant is refused admission, although some may be encouraged to take remedial training before enrolling in the more advanced courses.

The students range in age from sixteen to sixty and include the employed as well as the unemployed. The TULC makes an active effort to secure students mainly through personal contacts. The program boasts a high rate of placement of its graduates and a low dropout rate. The TULC has further hopes. If funds become available, it plans to hire a full-time educational director "to organize a full schedule of day and night classes in a wide range of business, technical and academic fields." It believes that "fulfillment of these goals will give to our city an education center unparalleled in the country and will set an example of community cooperation never before attained." [4]

The TULC's success is due not only to its devoted leadership but also to its use of the Negro community as the source both of students and of funds, ideas, staff, and leaders. Its members (particularly those who are union officials) have been able to insure, directly or indirectly, that its trainees are placed in jobs. The students know this, and stick with the

courses, despite the simple facilities and the lack of professional teachers. The TULC has made its center, with its bars and cabarets, a community meeting place for Negroes, but has also created a place where Negroes can be trained for jobs.

What the TULC has done for Detroit, the Opportunities Industrialization Center (OIC) has done for Philadelphia. Both organizations have their roots in the Negro community, but the base of the OIC is not in the labor movement. In Philadelphia a few years ago, disturbed by the fact that so many firms were not hiring Negroes, a group of Negro ministers sponsored a "selective patronage" boycott against these companies. When the companies argued that they would hire Negroes if they had the skills, these ministers began to push for a training program. They asked the business firms to donate money and equipment. The companies gave $250,000; the Ford Foundation contributed another $200,000; and the Negro community dug into its pockets to give another $102,000. Housed in a former police station, renovated for training purposes, the OIC seems more successful in attracting Philadelphia Negroes (the programs are not limited to Negroes) to its courses than are the Federally sponsored MDTA programs in the area. More people applied for enrollment than there were spaces. A vast majority of those who have graduated from OIC have been placed in jobs. Convinced of the value of OIC's approach, the Labor Department gave it a grant of almost $500,000 in December 1964.[5]

Much of the OIC's success springs from the involvement of the Negro in the program, the pride the Negroes feel in its success, and from the opportunity for self-help it provides. The organization sprang from a need felt by the Negroes; it was started by Negro leaders; it has been supported financially, in some measure, by the Negro community and by fees paid by those students who can afford them; and it permits communication to take place between the Negro leadership and the white power structure. The Negro can now negotiate more forcefully with industrial leaders, for the Negroes who are

now peacefully trying to provide executives with trained personnel were earlier involved in more direct action against them. The OIC's philosophy is to take the struggle off the streets and into the classroom.

The TULC and OIC programs indicate that an important ingredient in the success of any job training program for Negroes is the involvement of Negroes in agitating for it, developing it, and criticizing it. One of the difficulties of most training programs is that the people with the least skill and education and those who have been out of work the longest are the ones who hesitate the longest before entering such programs, and are the first to drop out. Those hard-core unemployed who do graduate benefit markedly. One reason for the failure of these people to enter programs has been a failure of communication. The Negro community and its leadership, once involved in these programs, can promote them better through private talks than other programs are promoted by the brochures and announcements so frequently used and so rarely read—particularly when the prospective trainees are semiliterate. Just as young students in school need pressure and support from "significant others," such as their parents and peers, if they are to do well in school and remain committed to education, so do adult Negroes need such support and pressure if they are to participate in and gain from job-training programs. If their peers in the Negro community and the leaders of the national and local civil rights organizations are committed to job-training programs, the adult Negro will be more likely to be committed as well.

The families of the Negroes involved also have a role to play in job-training programs. To reinforce the change in attitude needed for the long-unemployed and disheartened adult to become a student, his wife and other members of his family also ought to be involved in adult education through group discussions and other activities.[6] The failure to make use of such "significant others" helps explain why there is such a large dropout rate among adults taking training programs and

why those with the least education tend not even to enter these programs. The success of future programs rests in large part on how much of this lesson is learned.

□ Job Training in a Coordinated Attack on Poverty

Job-training ought to be part of a community's coordinated antipoverty and antidiscrimination program. One such program has been developed in Detroit—the Total Action Against Poverty, or TAP.[7]

TAP grew out of a realization of the possibilities of assistance that would be available after the eventual passage of the antipoverty act by Congress. Aware of the problems faced by the poor, Detroit's mayor appointed a committee in 1964 to plan a constructive and coordinated assault against unemployment and poverty. TAP's goals are "to develop responsible citizens, generate greater participation in community life and the problems of others, and build into the lives of the impoverished the skills and aspirations for useful and rewarding lives." Having learned of some of the weaknesses of existing training programs, TAP's program recognizes that three factors are essential to its success:

> First, the attack against poverty must be comprehensive and coordinated. A host of services of high quality must be concentrated in priority areas in order to meet the problem.
>
> Second, these services must be offered where the disadvantaged are—in their own neighborhoods. Maximum help cannot come from downtown or from some centralized agency to which the poor cannot relate themselves.
>
> Third, that unless new jobs are opened so that work becomes available to the poor, the program will be unsuccessful.

Within a number of target areas, small community centers are to be set up in which community action will be mobilized. "The staff will enlist the cooperation of institutions and facilities in the surrounding neighborhood: the churches, union halls, lodges and fraternal organizations, the schools. Even vacant store fronts should be pressed into service. It is into

these locations, where the local population feels at home, that the programs should flow."

Community action will focus on six types of programs. Job-related adult education is one of these, but it is not a priority program, and the details of its implementation are not spelled out. However, job training could be tied in with a priority item, such as the community school concept. This program, worked out in the Great Cities Project in Detroit, is based on the idea of relating the schools in poor neighborhoods to the total community, and includes the provision that school buildings will "be kept open in the evenings for programs which range from unstructured meetings to short term courses and recreational activities." Job training for young adults between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one will take place in residential centers so that they can "participate in organized educational and training programs while living in a supportive environment."

In approaching unemployment, TAP's goal is to "prepare low income people for the world of work, this includes literacy, academic and vocational training and, where necessary, helping people overcome the psychological blocks which inhibit or prevent them from taking advantage of training and/or job resources." All of this is important and essential, but the only specific recommendation for immediate adult training is designed to produce various types of assistants to work in the target projects. Very few detailed, immediate projects in the area of adult job-training programs are specified—however, there is a long-term commitment in this field. TAP does propose that a job-opportunity inventory be started and maintained in order to provide "a more efficient system of matching jobs, training and people."

TAP learned much from the successes and failures of other attempts at fighting poverty: its use of a community center in the area where the disadvantaged live as the focus of activities; its recognition that such people need, and should plan, their own special programs and services of many different kinds; its desire to train those who live in the community and

suffer from its endemic hardships to work with their fellow residents; and its awareness of the need to coordinate activities and its willingness to bring all interested organizations, such as schools and churches, together—all of these are major steps in the right direction.

And yet, perhaps because of the immensity of its task, if it does not take certain additional steps, the Total Action Against Poverty may in fact become only a Partial Action Against Poverty.

It is hard, for example, to discover exactly what TAP will do to help unemployed adults to gain the job skills now needed to secure employment. This vagueness in goals is partly intentional, since the TAP planners argue that the specific programs should be developed by the poor themselves. But some aspects are spelled out specifically, while others are not. TAP's community centers "may provide space for training sessions and meetings." There may be some training as a by-product of Great Cities School. There will be training for the sixteen- to twenty-one-year-olds. And although TAP's long-term goals include adult education for jobs, only the training of workers for community centers or community-related projects (such as day-care centers or neighborhood conservation projects) is specified in the priority section where this training is discussed, and even there the emphasis is on the sixteen- to twenty-one-year-old group.

TAP may eventually reach the unemployed worker who is over twenty-one, but it appears that this may take a long while—a serious shortcoming for many reasons. The first is that it obviously condemns a part of the population to poverty and joblessness through lack of training. True, various community services, such as medical and mental health programs, will be made available to members of this group. But their main problem is not that they are sick; it is that they are unskilled and unemployed.

Second, some of the projects given priority would achieve more rapid and lasting success if they were coordinated with an adult job-training program. Let us, for example, examine

TAP's programs for education, a priority item. It suggests a host of worthwhile activities that will enrich the life of the children, including the community school concept, where the goal is to get the parent interested and involved in school activities so that he will help his child improve in school work. But, as we mentioned earlier, a deeper involvement would result from effective adult job training and placement taking place within the school, for, as one educator put it, "a father who feels defeated by the world is not in a good position to give his son a sense of optimism and a feeling that he can achieve anything himself." [8]

Under the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, a community action program is eligible for grants if it:

> (*a*) mobilizes and utilizes resources, public or private . . . in an attack on poverty; (*b*) provides services, assistance, and other activities of sufficient scope and size to give promise of progress toward elimination of poverty or a cause or causes of poverty . . . ; (*c*) is developed, conducted, and administered with the maximum feasible participation of residents of the areas . . . ; (*d*) is conducted, administered, or coordinated by a public or non-profit private agency, or combination thereof.[9]

Though the Federal aid Detroit seeks (as do other cities) will be most helpful to its program, much of what is proposed in TAP is possible without Federal assistance. A community that wants to provide the adult Negro with a second chance can develop a program by itself.[10]

Such a program should include the following elements: (*1*) the civic leadership committed to job-training activities as part of a coordinated program; (*2*) the Negro community involved in planning, execution, and administration; (*3*) the school system active in developing the job-training courses; (*4*) business firms and unions using their influence in support of such programs, and helping to insure placements; (*5*) educators both in the public schools and in the universities conducting research on how to educate the adult poor most effectively; (*6*) adult students receiving financial assistance or being able

to work part-time; (7) the skills taught being usable on more than one job so that the trainee can be more flexible in his job search; and (8) the community developing a growing economy to provide jobs for the trainees.

The community must of course recognize that its activities alone may not be able to solve the problem of securing enough jobs for its residents, since national policies and activities elsewhere will affect the local job market. Still, such a community program might break the vicious cycle that poor education has imposed upon the Negro by stunting his skills both as a child and as an adult. To some, this may indeed appear to be the "dull side" of the Civil Rights Revolution; it can, however, be its most exciting and rewarding side.

NOTES

1. The authors would like to thank Daniel H. Kruger, Michael Borus, and Janet West of Michigan State University and Peter E. Siegle of the Center for the Study of Liberal Education for Adults for their cooperation in this study.
2. United Community Services of Metropolitan Detroit, *Adult Education,* March 1960, pp. 24, 26, and *passim.*
3. "Trade Union Leadership Council: Experiment in Community Action." Reprinted by TULC from *New University Thought,* September-October 1963.
4. *TULC Youth and Educational Center,* undated pamphlet.
5. *Wall Street Journal,* August 4, 1964, p. 1.
6. U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, *Training the Hard-Core Unemployed,* Cooperative Research Monograph No. 13 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), pp. 19, 69.
7. See *Total Action Against Poverty,* Proposed Community Action Program for Detroit, Michigan (Detroit, June 1964). All quotations concerning TAP come from this booklet.
8. Jean D. Gambs, "The Self-Concept: Basis for Re-Education of

Negro Youth," in William C. Kvaraceus, ed., *Negro Self-Concept: Implications for School and Citizenship* (Medford, Mass.: Tufts Univ. Press, 1964), p. 15.

9. Deborah P. Wolfe, "Section B: What the Economic Opportunity Act Means to the Negro," *The Journal of Negro Education*, XXXIV (Winter 1965), 90.
10. This study was completed late in 1964 and does not report on the many events that have taken place in Detroit and elsewhere since that date—particularly as a result of the impetus of the passage of the Economic Opportunity Act.

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